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ABSTRACT

Exploring the problem of high turnover rates for counselors at a therapeutic camp reveals that low job satisfaction--specifically lack of advancement and educational opportunities--is one frequent factor influencing resignation. This study examines the possibility of increasing agency support of personal advancement by creating individual development plans with each staff member. Plans include a needs assessment, a 1-year goal, several objectives and the strategies by which to achieve them. Job satisfaction is judged by means of pre- and post-implementation surveys. The results indicate an increase in staff perception of agency support, but no overall perception of increased job satisfaction. The relationship between support of career advancement and job satisfaction is explored, with the conclusion there is no link between the two, or that it is only one of several factors in job satisfaction. Other factors could include salary, communication and relationship to supervisor, responsibility, achievement and recognition. It is suggested that each of these factors be explored. With the short length of stay for counselors at most camps, there is not a strong emphasis on development outside of agency training. A final recommendation is that individual staff development should be explored as a permanent part of the agency's personnel programming. Contains 25 references and 5 appendices. The survey instruments are appended. (KW)

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Increasing Job Satisfaction of Therapeutic Camp Counselors Through the Use of Individual Staff Development Plans

by

Linda Tatsapaugh

Cohort 64

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A Practicum Report Presented to the
Master's Program in Lifespan Care Administration
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

7-23-95 _____

Date Signature of Student

Abstract

Increasing job satisfaction of therapeutic camp counselors through the use of individual staff development plans. Tatsapaugh, Linda, 1995: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Master's Program for Lifespan Care Administration. Descriptors: Job Satisfaction/Therapeutic Counselors/Therapeutic Wilderness Counselors/Direct Care Staff/Staff Development/Individual Staff Development Plans/Personal Growth/Wilderness Camp Staff/Turnover/Staff Retention.

The practicum agency had a high turnover rate among its program staff. A review of former employees indicated low job satisfaction as one frequent factor influencing resignation -- specifically, lack of advancement and educational opportunities.

The author sought to increase agency support of personal advancement by creating individual development plans with each staff person. These included a needs assessment, a one-year goal, several objectives, and the strategies by which to achieve them.

Job satisfaction was judged by means of pre- and post-implementation surveys. The results showed an increase in staff perception of agency support, but no overall perception of increased job satisfaction. The individual staff development plans became a permanent part of the agency's personnel programming; however, other sources of increased job satisfaction must still be discovered. Appendices include surveys and components of the development plans.

CHAPTER 1

THE PRACTICUM AGENCY

THE SETTING

The practicum facility is a therapeutic wilderness camp (TWC). It is referred to by its clients and staff as "camp", and so will it be called in this paper. The clients are "campers," and the program staff are "counselors." Although these terms may at first feel less professional than others, this is the terminology of TWC's and will serve to adequately portray the setting.

Therapeutic wilderness camps are not new, but are still considered an "alternative placement" by many placement providers. One of the earliest examples, regarded by many as the grandfather of TWC's, is Camp Woodland Springs, supported by the Salesmanship Club. It was founded by Campbell Loughmiller in the 1940's to serve emotionally disturbed boys. He described his program in The Wilderness Road, a book that many TWC's

use as a guide for their own programs. As he explains in the book, "Life in this setting provides for the maximum variety, freshness, and intensity in the daily experience of each boy....Outdoor camping of this sort naturally leaves with the individual and his group the main responsibilities for their comfort and well being.... These things in themselves provide objective discipline and play no little part in developing a sense of social responsibility" (1965, p.1).

There are basic structural similarities among TWC's. The group of campers usually has to build its own campsite, in which the members live for the duration of their stay. Group size generally ranges from 6-12. Counselors live with the campers and guide them through the daily routine of life in the woods. The purpose of this setting is to remove the youth from everything familiar which might support dysfunctional habits or distract them. This allows the campers to begin anew and more easily acquire socially appropriate behavior. There are also many prime opportunities in

such a primitive and compact community to raise self-esteem and learn to trust others. Each new skill, such as choosing which tree to cut down, designing a shelter, or planning a well-balanced menu, gives the child one more ability of which to be proud. And nothing can be done without affecting the entire group.

This particular camp has existed as a residential program for four years. It consists of three groups of campers: two entry-level and one advanced. The only requirements for admission are to be a male between the ages of 10 and 17 with an IQ above 70. Beyond this, it is left to the discretion of the admissions committee to determine whether the program can serve a particular child. Behavioral issues presented include assault, verbal aggression, stealing, sexual offending, substance abuse, and habitual noncompliance.

The process through which a camper reaches graduation includes completion of a level system and progress on personal goals to the point of being able to live productively in society. Generally, the camper

will take 6 to 12 months to move through the entry-level group. Then he will join the advanced group to begin his transition process. Campers may transition into their own homes, foster homes, or independent living, depending on their treatment teams' assessment of their needs. Total stay at camp averages about a year. This length of stay is fully dependent upon the camper's willingness to work through the program; some campers have remained in the program over two years.

Several components of the program combine to provide the therapy for change. Campers attend school on campus, where an emphasis is placed on teaching vocationally-oriented skills. In the campsite, campers continue to learn hard skills, such as carpentry, cooking, laundry, and good hygiene. They also learn wilderness skills such as packing a pack, orienteering, building a campfire, and tying proper rock-climbing knots. They spend a significant amount of their time doing daily chores, such as cleaning the shelter, chopping wood, scrubbing the showerhouse, and doing

laundry.

Among all these activities, issues are resolved as they arise, in a group process. When a group is called, all activity stops, the group members gather in a circle, and the issue is discussed until it is resolved. Resolution comes when the perpetrators have taken responsibility for their behavior, come up with alternative responses which would have been more appropriate, and accepted any natural consequences which the group thinks are necessary. The process may take minutes or hours, but it is the central mechanism in the therapeutic process at the camp, and therefore takes precedence over all other activities. This method of counselling is based on William Glasser's reality therapy, which asserts that a person chooses his or her behavior, and is responsible for making that choice regardless of past circumstances (Corey, 1991). Campers are not asked why they did something (which presupposes that there could be an excuse), but only required to deal with the fact that they did do

something.

The counselor's role in the camp structure is that of leader, teacher, parent, facilitator, and therapist. Two counselors work together at all times with each group. They are responsible for getting the group through the daily schedule, attending to personal needs of the campers, and providing therapeutic situations and guidance continuously throughout the day. They are supervised by a senior counselor, but maintain a large amount of autonomy within the group. Planning and carrying out of wilderness trips are also their responsibility, as is all of the paperwork recording the treatment received by each camper.

THE AUTHOR'S ROLE

This author's role in the camp is that of program director. She supervises the senior counselors and virtually every action which is directly related to the well-being and daily life of the campers. This includes arranging doctor's appointments, providing

clothing and other necessities, creating the staff schedule, approving trip proposals, resolving inter-group issues, running treatment team meetings, talking with parents, and training the program staff. She reports program activities to the administrative committee, which consists of the executive director, records manager, business manager, public relations director, and the author.

The training of staff is one of the author's major job functions. She does all of the recruitment and interviewing of potential staff, hires in consultation with the administrative committee, and coordinates orientation. Following this, she arranges the annual recertifications as well as varied targeted workshops throughout the year. She must make sure staff receive a minimum amount of clinical supervision per month, and any extra they may request. She runs the daily staff meetings. Finally, she does the 6-month staff evaluations and keeps staff files up-to-date. She shares some of these responsibilities with the

executive director and the records manager, where their expertise is required. Staff training usually must be fit into the three hours a day during which the campers are in school and into the homestays which occur every six to eight weeks.

At five members, the administrative staff is highly functional. There are few enough members to thoroughly discuss all important issues. At the same time, each person has a large amount of autonomy, because there is little overlap in job descriptions. If anything, each person takes on more than his or her original function. All five members, who are the founding members of the residential program, operate on a relatively equal basis, with the executive director only rarely exercising her veto power. Therefore, The author has had full reign to alter the staff training program. Her final proposal was presented to the administrative committee and, with its approval, implemented. No fundamental changes were made which required the approval of the board of directors.

Most of the author's relevant experience has been on-the-job at the TWC. She was employed prior to the arrival of the first campers, and has had the opportunity to help create the camp program from the beginning. She worked her way up from counselor to senior counselor to program director in three years. Therefore, she has experienced program staff needs and desires in a development program. She has sought to meet these needs on an individual basis, and so she is aware of potential sources of those elements. The current training program prior to this practicum was developed in large part by the author. The program's youth, as well as the program director's limited amount of experience, contributed to its rather rough state.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The practicum camp has a problem with high turnover among its program staff. Although they do competent work while employed there, they do not remain for long. Retention is low, at an average of ten months. This is roughly the amount of time needed to be trained and familiarized with the program. Thus, the majority of staff at all times can be considered "new." This affects quality of work within the program, its effectiveness, and the morale of fellow staff persons. It also costs the program a considerable amount in hiring and orientation expenses. For these reasons, it is important to increase the retention of program staff.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Due to the newness of the camp, a complete picture

of staff turnover is easily drawn. As of the beginning of the practicum, of the thirty-seven program employees who had ever worked for the camp, twenty-one had left. Five left to go to school, three moved on to new opportunities in the field, five had personal issues unrelated to camp, four were asked to leave, and four were purely dissatisfied with their jobs. The average length of employment for those who had left was 9.9 months. Of the sixteen currently employed, four had been here over one year. The average tenure of current program employees was 8.6 months; however, six employees were added recently as a result of program expansion. Average tenure without those six was 12.6 months.

While four of the five who left to go to school had those plans prior to accepting employment, the three who left for new jobs all expressed that their needs for advancement were no longer being met by the camp. They had "maxed out" of learning opportunities. The four dissatisfied staff named the campers as their

reasons for leaving, implying that child care was not an appropriate occupation for them. The five with personal issues could not be helped by the program, and the four who were asked to leave were not contributing effectively toward the program. Two current staff persons spoke in their evaluation meetings about searching out educational opportunities, possibly resulting in leaving their jobs (personal interviews, Sept. 1994).

There are several methods for calculating turnover. For the purposes of this paper, turnover will be the number of staff who leave in a particular time period divided by the number of positions existing at that time. The time period most logical for the camp is the school year, from June 1 of one year to May 31 of the next. By this method, turnover for 1991/92 was 83%, for 1992/93 it was 64%, and for 1993/94 it was 45%.

This high rate of turnover is found in many child and youth care positions. Krueger places the average

length of stay in this field at one to two years, with shorter stays at any one place of employment (1986, p.33). A review of literature found child care turnover rates ranging from 23% to 60% (Bonsutto, 1993; Finnell, 1992).

Effects of High Turnover Documented

Effectiveness can be judged, in a limited fashion, through the restrictive intervention reports. These reports are filed on any staff intervention which in some way limits or denies a right of the client. The most extreme of these is physical restraint. Included on each report is a list of preventive strategies attempted before becoming restrictive. The expected findings would be that counselors with more experience would have more attempted preventive strategies than new counselors. Over the months of May through August of 1994, the staff number almost tripled; five staff persons were added, and four more temporary staff worked through the summer, joining the five experienced staff members. The average number of alternative

strategies attempted per intervention fell from 2.6 to 1.9. If these statistics are reliable indicators, then longer tenures would result in the use of more strategies, which in turn should lead to fewer restrictive interventions.

In the short tradition of the camp, staff turnover has demonstrated the domino effect. The first year brought three simultaneous resignations; the second year saw a wave of four; and most recently, four left at virtually the same time. All four of the current employees who have over a year's tenure lamented the quick turnover and its effect on both their groups and their fellow staff members (personal communications, September 26, 1994). Morale is weakened by the loss of a member. In an informal survey of staff opinions on development, the senior counselor named turnover as the single largest factor affecting his staff (personal communication, Sept. 5, 1994).

To consider the costs incurred as a result of a high turnover rate, one must include advertising,

shipping of application packets, the time of the program director and office manager in processing applications and doing interviews, and the training time and materials used during orientation. To fill one position, the estimated cost is $500. Multiply this by eight to ten positions per year, and the cost of high turnover rises into the thousands.

THE PROBLEM ANALYZED

Turnover results from several types of job termination: lay-offs, dismissal, retirement, and resignation. The first two are involuntary separations; the second two are voluntary (i.e. initiated by the employee) (Berger, 1988). Only a small number of the practicum agency's terminations have been involuntary; therefore, efforts to reduce turnover should be concentrated on voluntary separation. As described above, reasons given for resignation from the agency have included a return to school, career advancement, dissatisfaction with the

clientele, and personal reasons unrelated to camp. The agency has little or no control over personal issues. Although efforts are made to acquaint prospective staff with the nature of the clients prior to hiring (via a 48-hour visit and worst-case scenario discussions), a staff person will occasionally find himself or herself in an inappropriate occupation. Since the campers are not going to change for the sake of the staff, this sort of turnover is also difficult to avoid.

The terminations which can thus be targeted for analysis are those for the purposes of career advancement and schooling (also a form of career advancement). Another which might be explored, although not noted in this agency's staff, is burnout. Cherniss noted four types of burnout: occupational tedium (exhibited as exhaustion), loss of concern for clients, psychological withdrawal from the job, and loss of meaning or purpose for the job (cited in Austin, Brannon, & Pecora, 1984). The three reasons are related -- in all cases, the job is no longer

providing personal satisfaction.

In the most basic sense, satisfaction comes from meeting various needs. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, these are physiological (food, shelter, and clothing), security (in this case, job security), belonging (being a recognized part of the program), self-esteem (being valued and valuing oneself), and self-actualization (achieving one's potential) (cited in Donaldson, 1980).

Finnell reports that most early research centered on job satisfaction as a major determinant of turnover (1992). This he, in turn, relates to salary, recognition, responsibility, advancement, relationship with one's supervisor, and amount of training offered. Krueger echoes the relationship of job satisfaction to turnover (1986a), and links satisfaction to supervision, salary, advancement, and training, as well as continued education and career counseling (1990). The factors which are repeated over and over in the literature are adequate salary, regular supervision,

good communication, recognition, achievement, career counseling, and advancement (MacDonald, 1982; Quick, 1980; Roxe, 1979).

Satisfaction can also be put in terms of self-esteem, which is built up by a sense of importance in the job (Cherniss, as cited in Austin, et al., 1984). Importance is increased through development of the person's abilities.

Job satisfaction, then, can be maintained and increased in a myriad of ways, all of which signal advancement to the employee. That advancement can be packaged comprehensively in what is known as staff development. Staff development is defined as "any process or program to improve staff performance by enhancing work-relevant knowledge and skills" (Austin, et al., 1984, p.81). It is important that whatever training is provided increases both abilities and, consequentially, potential for career advancement (Austin et al., 1984). In these times of continued low salaries for child care workers, development can be

seen as a valuable alternative compensation (Austin, et al., 1984).

CHAPTER 3

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal: By the end of the ten week practicum period, to increase job satisfaction among program staff, as measured by pre- and post-intervention surveys, in order to lengthen staff tenure with the agency.

Objectives:

I. By the end of the ten-week period, to increase by 20% program staff perception of agency support of career advancement, as measured by pre- and post-intervention surveys.

II. By the end of the ten-week period, to increase program staff's self-projected length of stay in the field of child and youth care by 25%.

III. By the end of the ten-week period, to increase program staff's self-projected length of stay with the

agency by 20%.

CHAPTER 4

SOLUTION STRATEGY

EXISTING STRATEGIES

As expressed in the problem analysis, job satisfaction has been found to depend on numerous factors. Among those most often noted are salary; communication and relationship to supervisor; responsibility, achievement, and recognition; and career counselling and advancement (Finnell, 1992; Krueger, 1990; MacDonald, 1982; Quick, 1980; Roxe, 1979).

Salary

Returning to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the two most basic needs are physiological needs and security. In modern society, most physiological needs (i.e., food, shelter, clothing, and medical care) are bought; therefore, the acquisition of money most directly fulfills these needs (Donaldson, 1980). Security comes from the knowledge of continued income of money, as

well as from things which are bought (e.g., a house, locks, police, etc.). Also, families are able to stay together, lending security to the children especially, only when money is available.

While salary is not necessarily the most important factor contributing to job satisfaction, it rises in importance when a worker cannot meet basic needs (Krueger, 1986a). Salaries for child care workers are typically low. One survey in 1987 found an average salary range of $13,000 to $13,999 (Krueger et al.). During the same time period, Krueger gave the average starting salary as $8,000 to $10,000 (1986). The official poverty level salary for a family of four is just over $14,000.

A brief survey of therapeutic wilderness camps found starting salary to average $15,000. The practicum agency's starting salary for program staff is $15,500. The current average salary among the agency's program staff is $16,477, well above the average child care worker.

One factor accounting for the higher salary is that camp counselors work more than forty hours per week. At the practicum agency, counselors are on duty 72 hours at a time, including sleep time, which means an average of fifty-six waking hours of work per week. However, this is partially off-set by approximately 45 extra days off throughout the year.

Communication and Relationship to Supervisor

The working atmosphere of an agency is set by the staff, through their relationships with one another. While some of this is personal, much is controlled by the agency. The lines of communication are established through policies, as are the relationships of supervisors to their staff. Several staff members of the practicum agency wrote in a survey on staff development needs that communication among staff was an important need for them (personal communication, September, 1994).

Bonsutto found a direct link between the feedback abilities of supervisors and the job satisfaction of

their staff (1993). An increase in supervisors' abilities, gained through training, resulted in an increase in staff job satisfaction. Pecora, Whittaker, and Maluccio describe elements of the effective supervisor's approach to staff to include worker empowerment, encouragement of professional growth, availability for consultation and support, advocacy, and acknowledgement of achievement (1992).

The practicum agency employs the team approach to service, with senior counselors supervising the staff teams. Each team works with one particular group of campers. Senior counselors are responsible for communicating between direct-care staff and administration. The seniors meet with a consultant specifically on supervision matters twice monthly, and with the program director weekly. The program director, clinical supervisor, and executive director also attend staff team meetings weekly or more often, to keep the paths of communication open for all staff.

Responsibility, Achievement, and Recognition

In a survey using a version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form, Hauber and Bruininks divided satisfaction into extrinsic and intrinsic factors (cited in Buckhalt, Marchetti, & Bearden, 1990). The intrinsic factors centered around the ability of workers to do something useful, or of service to another person. Sluyter and Mukherjee, using their Job Satisfaction Survey, named the intrinsic "motivators" to include recognition, achievement, and responsibility (cited in Buckhalt et al., 1990). Herzberg echoes that in his theory of job satisfiers, which include the same elements (responsibility, achievement, and recognition) as "satisfiers" or positive reinforcement for staying on the job, as opposed to certain "dissatisfiers," which would lessen the propensity to stay (cited in Quick, 1980).

At the practicum agency, staff teams have full responsibility for planning the treatment of each of their campers, as well as for scheduling daily

activities and requesting equipment and materials. They meet with parents on visitation days and usually sit in on meetings with the campers' mental health treatment teams (external to the agency). The clinical supervisor checks their paperwork and treatment plans. The program director approves activities. The business manager approves purchasing requests. However, the bulk of responsibility lies with the counselors.

Attempts have been made to better recognize achievement by all staff. An "Above and Beyond" award was established, for which any staff member may nominate any other staff member for service above and beyond the call of duty. Most other recognition is currently on an informal, feedback basis.

Career Counseling and Advancement

In the survey by Hauber and Bruininks, the extrinsic factors of satisfaction were related to compensation, but also to opportunities for advancement in the job (cited in Buckhalt et al., 1990). Purcell recommends development as a means to avoid stagnation

and secure commitment to the agency (1987). He found growth to be more important to the employee than high pay. In a survey, MacDonald found that, although first-level supervisors of one firm found little time to do career counselling with their staff, they rated their own receipt of it to be highly important to them (1982).

Within the realm of staff development, Tsai cautions that training needs should be balanced with the development of the professional lives of the staff (1992). Selman and Shum (1990) found staff development within a technical college to impact staff morale, which in turn directly affected job satisfaction. Several sources view staff development as the new fringe benefit in these times of scarce salary increases (Austin, Brannon, & Pecora, 1984; Pecora et al., 1992).

At the practicum agency, staff development had so far been limited to required training and random attendance at outside workshops. Those who had sought

further education had done so on their own. The agency did have an educational reimbursement policy; but the procedure for using it had not been clearly defined, and no one had taken advantage of it yet. An interview with the assistant director of a model TWC revealed that they also only provided required training within the agency (personal interview, September, 1994). However, they did encourage further education, and work to adjust schedules to make it feasible. Several other TWC's reported such short terms for direct-care staff, or such demanding schedules, that outside education was not possible.

PROPOSED STRATEGY

This practicum focussed on staff development as a solution to increase job satisfaction and thus decrease program staff turnover at the practicum agency. Staff development was defined for the purpose of this practicum as any activity designed to improve the abilities of a staff person to carry out the broad

missions of the agency and its career field, while promoting personal and professional growth (Austin et al., 1984; Doelker & Lynett, 1983). A staff development program is an organized and integrated assembly of activities for the same purpose (Lee, 1984). An individual staff development plan is one particular staff person's plan for development within the program.

It is important to note the distinction between staff development and training. Training is the teaching of particular skills for a definite purpose; development includes training as well as many activities that are more broadly connected to the overall goals of the agency and the person (Lee, 1984). The need for personal and professional development is given equal legitimacy to agency needs. Training enhances the position; development enhances the person.

Reasons for Staff Development as a Strategy

This is the area in which the least amount of effort had been made in the short history of the

agency. With the recent doubling of the number of program staff, the need became evident. The counselors who left for reasons that could have been impacted by the agency left seeking career advancement, either in the form of another job or further education.

As noted above, when salaries cannot be increased, staff development can serve as a welcome fringe benefit. In the practicum agency, payroll and related costs compose well over 60% of the total budget. Without raising tuition for campers, starting salaries cannot change; tuition was raised this year by over 20%, and will not increase again soon.

Staff development addresses a person's most basic needs by improving the ability to provide for oneself (Roxe, 1979). A better-qualified worker will feel more secure in this ability, and thus more satisfied with the job which is furthering this ability. While other needs could be addressed in a solution, until the most basic needs are met, a person will not be concerned with higher needs (belongingness, self-esteem, and

self-actualization). At the same time, staff development can affect these higher needs through making staff feel like valued members of the team, boosting confidence through the acquisition of new skills, and supporting movement toward personal goals.

The double usefulness of staff development is that it increases a worker's competence in the job as well as his or her satisfaction with the job (Doriety, 1987). It was not expected that activities completely unrelated to the child and youth care profession (e.g., electronic engineering) would be supported. One should be able to connect activities in some reasonable way to the agency's mission (Austin et al., 1984). In addition to increased competence, staff development offers the opportunity to have new ideas introduced into the agency (Purcell, 1987). Finally, an agency that is committed enough to its staff to invest in their development can secure or increase staff commitment to the agency.

Steps to Creating a Comprehensive Plan

There are three basic steps to creating a comprehensive staff development plan. The first is to gain administrative support in the form of agency policy (Doelker & Lynett, 1983; Lee, 1984; Roxe, 1979). There must be a clear mission statement and set of organizational goals, as well as a policy for the provision of staff development. The practice of development must pervade the entire organization, and the administrative personnel and supervisors must all be committed to its success. A policy alone will only affect the paper on which it is written.

An existing policy should be studied for feasibility of implementation within the agency (Austin et al., 1984). Organizational structure, regulations, and both direct care and administrative attitudes and perceptions should be assessed. If a policy does not exist, it should be created before proceeding, to avoid confusion.

The second step is the solicitation of full involvement by all levels of staff. As Lee points out,

staff are the agency's primary resource, and should be fully involved in their own development (1984). Also, people tend to support change more if they have been involved in its development. And no one can know as well as the worker himself or herself what types of development are most needed or desired (Doelker & Lynett, 1983).

One basic method of beginning the process is with an agency-wide needs assessment (Doelker & Lynett, 1983). This should be a survey to discover the difference between what is and what should be (Tsai, 1992). This assessment should include requests from staff as well as an assessment of what is lacking (Kagan, 1983). Areas of assessment include program goals, types of service provided, use of resources, structure of the organization, and administrative and direct care interpretations of developmental needs (Lee, 1984).

Once an assessment has been made, a plan of action must be created, again with the involvement of all

levels of staff. Goals are set to address situations to be changed. Strategies for achieving those goals, and the means for assessing whether they have been achieved, are then developed (Brillinger, 1990). The goals should be measurable, attainable, and time-limited. The strategies should be feasible within the structure of the organization. It is counterproductive to make a plan that has little chance of succeeding.

The third step is to procure agency support for implementation of the plan. This should have been designated through the policy in step one. The necessary resources should be approved in terms of trainers, coverage for time spent in development activities, reimbursement for those activities, and encouragement to participate. The availability of these resources should have been assessed during the needs assessment, and the means for approval should be present in the policy statement.

Supervisors need to be committed to the advancement of their staff. As Kagan points out, staff

participation is directly related to the encouragement given by their supervisors (1983). Administrative support and interest should back up the supervisors.

Mention should be made here of some of the various activities which might be included in a staff development program. These include, but are not limited to, workshops and symposia, mentors, visitation of other programs, peer counseling, reading, certifications, college degrees, special projects, retreats, personnel exchange, advocacy work, sabbaticals, and basic in-house training (Doriety, 1987; Harrington & Honda, 1986; Lee, 1984; Pecora et al., 1992; Selman & Shum, 1990).

Steps Taken in the Practicum

To create a comprehensive staff development program for the practicum agency would have taken more than the ten weeks allotted for the practicum. What was attempted was the creation of the individual component of staff development. That is, individual development plans were created by each of the program

staff. For each one, a needs assessment was done; then goals, objectives, and strategies were created. Methods of evaluation were developed for each objective.

The first step was a review of agency mission, goals and objectives, and policy on staff development.

The second step was a needs assessment with each staff person. Each worker identified areas in which he or she would like to grow professionally. From these two, development objectives were created. All of this was done by the staff person in conference with the program director.

In the same conference, strategies were developed to meet the objectives. The strategies included naming specific activities to be engaged in, a schedule of the activities, and a list of the resources necessary.

Evaluation

There was not time within the practicum period to begin the actual development components in a significant way. Therefore, evaluation of the

practicum was based on the amount of increase of job satisfaction caused by the creation of staff development plans, rather than by their implementation. The objectives were measured by taking surveys before and after the practicum period. Questions centered on staff perception of agency support, of their intentions to remain in the field of child and youth care, and of their intentions to remain with the agency.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

The implementation of the practicum consisted of three steps. First, the program staff of the camp were given a survey to measure job satisfaction (Appendix A). Next, the author did a needs assessment (Appendix B) and individual staff development plan (Appendix C) with each staff person. Finally, the survey was given to all staff again, in order to measure any changes in job satisfaction. Sixteen people were involved initially. Of those, twelve were still employed at the end of the practicum period. Eight of them returned their post-intervention surveys. It is their results which were compared with the pre-intervention findings for measurement of goal progress.

The survey was created by the author to record job satisfaction from several angles, as well as to cross-reference possible outside factors. The answers were subjective, designed to measure perceptions, not

necessarily facts. The needs assessment, too, allowed each person to subjectively decide what skills or information he or she needed and how crucial each need was, without outside measurement of any sort. The development plans were developed with coaching by the author, to ensure the quality of objectives (i.e. that they were measurable and obtainable), and to offer suggestions and, occasionally, limitations. However, the content of the plans was entirely up to the staff.

The implementation phase lasted for ten working weeks at the camp. Due to two homestay periods, this covered thirteen actual weeks. The first week consisted of locating the camp policy on staff development -- determining that this project was in line with the policy -- and distributing the survey. The author then met with two staff members each of the next eight weeks to create the staff development plans. Each session lasted approximately an hour, including completion of a needs assessment and creation of a

development plan. In the tenth week, the survey was given again, and results were tallied.

Results for Practicum Goal

The practicum goal was to increase job satisfaction among program staff, in order to lengthen staff tenure with the agency. According to the survey, the percentage of employees who were very or relatively satisfied remained constant at 87%. Therefore, the goal was not reached as defined. In fact, the percentage who were very satisfied decreased from 56% to 25%. However, those who look forward to coming to work always or usually rose from 67% to 87%, a 30% increase. This could be interpreted indirectly as an increase in satisfaction. (All survey results can be found in Appendix D.)

Results for Objective One

The first objective called for a 20% increase in staff perception of agency support of career

advancement. The first survey found 75% of staff to feel the agency was very or usually supportive. Following the intervention, 85% felt very or usually supportive, an increase of 13%. This falls short of the objective, but is a significant increase. However, the increase in those who felt very supported was 30%, rising from 44% to 57%. Additionally, the decrease in those feeling little or no support was 44%, falling from 25% to 14% of respondents. Therefore, this objective could be considered to be met. Verification of improvement can be found in comparison of the median responses: in the first survey, the median falls in the "relatively supported" category, whereas the second survey median lies in the "very supported" category. The importance of this objective is highlighted in the fact that 87% of staff intend to pursue further education in this field.

Results for Objective Two

The second objective projected a 25% increase in

program staff's self-projected length of stay in the child and youth care field. This factor remained relatively stable, with 68% intending to stay five or more years. However, before the intervention, 50% had plans to remain 10 or more years, and afterwards only 38% did. This may be explained in the small sample and the several surveys not turned in at the end of the intervention.

Results for Objective Three

The third objective was to increase program staff's self-projected length of stay with the agency by 20%. These results, too, may have been affected by the unrecovered surveys. Prior to the intervention, 44% intended to stay less than 2 years. Ten weeks later, 62% did. The first results also indicate 25% who intend to stay more than 5 years, whereas only 12% do in the later survey. This points to missing surveys or misunderstanding of the question. However, according to reported answers, this objective was not

met.

These results show that only one objective was met toward the goal of increased job satisfaction. As mentioned above, one-third of the post-intervention surveys to be measured were not returned. This may have skewed the results somewhat. Not included in the calculations were survey results from new staff members who had not taken the preliminary survey.

Several outside factors may have affected the results of the practicum study. During the ten-week period, four staff members left the program. One was planned long in advance, two were the result of family crises, and one was unexpected and unexplained. These had a negative effect on the morale of the remaining staff. Also, winter set in, and in the wilderness setting, cold weather makes life more difficult. Coupled with this, the camp was without maintenance personnel for two weeks, leaving a number of physical

plant needs unmet. Finally, the director was absent for much of the practicum period. All of these factors may have countered the effects of the intervention on staff job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In review, the goal of increased job satisfaction was not met, but held steady at an encouragingly high 87% for those very or relatively satisfied. This could only have increased a possible 15%. The movement which might have been made, but was not, would be from relatively to very satisfied.

The two objectives related to length of stay (one in the child care field, the other at this agency in particular) were also not met, and in fact decreased. As mentioned above, these results might have been very different if the four other surveys had been returned. However, another explanation is the young age and corresponding stage of career development of most of these staff persons. Only two respondents were over age 30, and most are in their first full-time job. Their plans and goals are likely to change frequently as they explore the professional world.

The only place for concern is in the large percentage who plan to remain with the camp less than one year, because this is in violation of the hiring agreement (a minimum one-year commitment). However, there are two explanations for this result. One is that most of the teaching staff were hired for one year, which is actually a 10-month period (i.e. less than one year). Also, one respondent who indicated having <u>already</u> been here more than one year marked his or her intentions to stay less than one year. In this case, the question was misread. Although this skewed results, it could not be determined which other category was more appropriate.

The objective which did indicate improvement was the one most directly related to the intervention. There was a marked improvement in staff perception of the camp's support of their career advancement. The maximum possible increase in those feeling very or usually supported was 33%. Therefore, the actual increase of 13% was encouraging. Even better was the

further breakdown of answers. The percentage who felt very supportive rose by 30%, while the percentage of those who felt little or no support fell 44% Since career advancement support was the direct focus of the practicum intervention, the practicum was indeed successful in its most narrow intention.

The question remaining is whether the premise was correct, whether support in career advancement actually does affect job satisfaction. This practicum indicates that either it does not, or that it is only one of several factors, and can be easily overshadowed. Perhaps there is another factor which is more important at this camp, which would be more likely to affect job satisfaction. Other possibilities include salary, communication and relationship to supervisor, responsibility, achievement, and recognition (Finnell, 1992; Krueger, 1990; MacDonald, 1982; Quick, 1980; Roxe, 1979). The next step at this agency would be to address each of these possibilities to the staff and solicit their opinions on what will increase their own

satisfaction. However, this should be done not for the purpose of increasing number, but with real compassion for the staff.

With so many employees at such an early stage in their career development, this author believes that directed individual development planning is an invaluable service to the staff. In the course of this practicum, two people have begun substance abuse counselor certifications, two have entered a first responder course, and one has started researching her best path to sex offender counselling. Prior to this project, no one was pursuing a defined course of improvement. Whether or not they translate that into greater job satisfaction, these employees are increasing their worth to the camp and their prospects for their own futures. Those with a purpose have been noted at this agency to have higher morale than those who let each day pass the same as the last. Therefore, this agency will continue doing yearly individual staff development plans.

The form of the plan may change somewhat. Several participants attempted to include camp-oriented objectives, such as upgrading their campsite to a certain level. These are performance goals, and there is certainly room for them in the program. Whether to combine the two or not remains a question for this agency. For now, staff development plans will be written at the 90-day initial evaluation and every year after that.

This information will be shared with the rest of the directors of the camp as well as the clinical supervisor, who oversees much of the staff clinical training. It will also be discussed with program directors of other therapeutic wilderness camps. The newly-formed National Association of Therapeutic Wilderness Camps (NATWC) holds an annual conference and prints a regular newsletter. Both forums will be explored for dissemination of information. With the short length of stay for counselors at most camps, there is not a strong emphasis on development outside

of agency training. The idea bears exploring within the camp setting.

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Appendix A

PROGRAM STAFF SURVEY

Instructions: Please answer the following questions with the choice that is most accurate for you. Check only one answer for each question. Answer all questions. When you are finished, place your survey in the included envelope, seal it, and place it in the designated box. Thank you!

1. How long have you worked for this agency?

[] fewer than 3 months [] 6-12 months

[] 3-6 months [] more than 12 months

2. How long have you worked in the child and youth care profession?

[] fewer than 6 months [] 2-3 years

[] 6-12 months [] 3-5 years

[] 1-2 years [] more than 5 years

3. Is child and youth care work what you thought it

would be?

[] yes [] no

4. Is this job what you thought it would be?

[] yes [] no

5. How well were you prepared by the agency for this job?

[] very well [] slightly

[] somewhat well [] not at all

[] adequately

6. How well does the training you receive at the agency meet your needs for this job?

[] very well [] slightly

[] somewhat well [] not at all

[] adequately

7. How supportive do you think the agency is of your professional development?

[] very supportive [] slightly supportive

[] usually supportive [] unsupportive

[] somewhat supportive

8. How satisfied are you with your job?

[] very satisfied [] slightly satisfied

[] relatively satisfied [] not satisfied

[] somewhat satisfied

9. How often do you look forward to coming to work?

[] always [] occasionally

[] usually [] never

[] sometimes

10. How long do you think you will remain with this agency (total time of service)?

[] less than one year [] 3-4 years

[] 1-2 years [] 4-5 years

[] 2-3 years [] more than 5 years

11. How long do you think you will remain in the child

and youth care field?

[] less than one year [] 3-5 years

[] 1-2 years [] 5-10 years

[] 2-3 years [] more than 10 years

12. Do you think you will remain in the child and youth care profession after this job?

[] yes [] no

13. How much formal education do you have?

[] high school diploma

[] some college credit

[] associates (2-year) degree

[] bachelors (4-year) degree

[] some graduate work

[] master's degree or more

14. Do you have a college degree in a subject related

to this field?

[] yes [] no

15. Do you plan to seek further education in this field?

[] yes [] no

16. How much support do you think your supervisor gives you on the job?

[] very much [] a little

[] relatively much [] not at all

[] some

17. How much feedback do you receive on your work?

[] very much [] sparse

[] relatively much [] none

[] some

Appendix B

PROGRAM STAFF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Name _____ Date_____

Position _____Group_____

I. Needs for current position - Following are a number of areas of possible training for your job. Read through it, add any which you think should be included, and check the ones which you consider to be needs for yourself in the first column. Then rate the importance of each to the performance of your job (1= not very important, 4= crucial).

	Need	Rating
1. Child development	____	____
2. Behavior management	____	____
3. Crisis intervention	____	____
4. Physical restraint	____	____
5. Substance abuse	____	____
6. Sex offense	____	____

7. Child abuse & neglect ____ ____
8. Treatment planning ____ ____
9. Theories of human behavior ____ ____
10. Reality therapy ____ ____
11. Other therapeutic approaches ____ ____
12. Abnormal behavior ____ ____
13. Child welfare law ____ ____
14. Client rights ____ ____
15. Diagnosis (DSM IV) ____ ____
16. State mental health system ____ ____
17. Clinical documentation ____ ____
18. Juvenile justice system ____ ____
19. Human sexuality ____ ____
20. Separation and loss ____ ____
21. Effective communication ____ ____
22. Effective consequences ____ ____
23. Techniques in group therapy ____ ____
24. Confidentiality ____ ____
25. Education theories ____ ____
26. Individual counselling skills ____ ____

27. Parenting skills ____ ____
28. Family counselling ____ ____
29. Cultural diversity ____ ____
30. Wilderness first aid ____ ____
31. Rock-climbing skills & safety ____ ____
32. Paddling skills & safety ____ ____
33. Ropes initiatives facilitation ____ ____
34. Backpacking skills & safety ____ ____
35. Supervisory skills ____ ____
36. Structure planning & building ____ ____
37. Daily scheduling with groups ____ ____
38. Trip planning & leading ____ ____
39. _____ ____ ____
40. _____ ____ ____
41. _____ ____ ____
42. _____ ____ ____

II. Needs for advancement - This section asks for some information on your current qualifications and your goals for the future in the child and youth care or

related fields.

A. Education: [] some high school [] 4-year degree

[] high school diploma [] some grad. work

[] some college [] masters degree

[] 2-year degree [] doctoral work

B. Do you plan to pursue further educational degrees?

[] yes [] no

If so, what type of degree and subject will it be?

_____

C. What other training do you have (e.g. workshops, certifications, etc.)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

D. What areas of your work most interest you, in which you would like to gain further skills or knowledge?

_____

_____

_____

E. What career path in this field most interests you?

[] direct care

[] program development (creating new programs)

[] administration

[] less direct work, such as counselling or social work.

[] teaching future workers

F. What kinds of training are effective for you?

[] in-house workshops [] off-campus workshops

[] conferences [] college classes

[] independent reading [] video/taped courses

[] program visitations [] _____

Appendix C

SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Name_____ Date_____

Supervisor_____

Effective dates of plan_____

One-Year Goal(s): _____

_____

_____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

_____

Strategy: _____

_____

_____

Completion Date: _____

Method of Evaluation: _____

_____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

_____

Strategy: _____

_____

_____

Completion Date: _____

Method of Evaluation: _____

_____

_____

Objective: _____

_____

_____

Strategy: _____

_____

_____

Completion Date: _____

Method of Evaluation: _____

_____

Appendix D

CALENDAR PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Week One - Give preliminary survey to all program staff.

- Research agency mission, goals, and staff development policy. Distribute to all staff.

Week Two - Make schedule of meeting dates with all staff.

Meet with first two staff persons.

Weeks 3-9 -Meet with two staff persons each week to do needs assessment and make plan.

Week Ten - Give post-intervention survey to all staff. Compare with first week's results.

Appendix E

SURVEY RESULTS

1. How long have you worked for this agency?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
< 3 months	5	0	33	0	-100
3-6 mos.	5	3	33	37	12
6-12 mos.	2	2	13	25	92
> 12 mos.	3	3	20	37	85

2. How long have you worked in the child and youth care profession?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
< 6 mos.	5	1	31	14	-55
6-12 mos.	1	1	6	14	133
1-2 yrs.	4	2	25	29	16
2-3 yrs.	3	2	19	29	53
3-5 yrs.	1	1	6	14	133
> 5 yrs.	2	0	13	0	-100

3. Is child and youth care work what you thought it would be?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
yes	13	8	93	100	8
no	1	0	7	0	-100

4. Is this job what you thought it would be?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
yes	14	8	88	100	14
no	2	0	13	0	-100

5. How well were you prepared by the agency for this job?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
very well	5	1	31	57	84
somewhat	2	4	13	29	123
adequately	6	3	38	14	-63
slightly	3	0	19	0	-100
not at all	0	0	0	0	0

6. How well does the training you receive at the agency meet your needs for this job?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
very well	5	2	31	25	-19

somewhat	4	6	25	75	200
adequately	6	0	38	0	-100
slightly	1	0	6	0	-100
not at all	0	0	0	0	0

7. How supportive do you think the agency is of your professional development?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
very	7	4	44	57	30
usually	5	2	31	29	-6
somewhat	3	1	19	14	-26
slightly	1	0	6	0	-100
not at all	0	0	0	0	0

8. How satisfied are you with your job?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
very	9	2	56	25	-55
relatively	5	5	31	62	100
somewhat	2	1	13	12	-8
slightly	0	0	0	0	0

not at all	0	0	0	0	0

9. How often do you look forward to coming to work?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
always	3	2	20	25	25
usually	7	5	47	62	32
sometimes	3	1	20	12	-40
occasionally	2	0	13	0	-100
never	0	0	0	0	0

10. How long do you think you will remain with this agency (total time of service)?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
< 1 yr.	2	4	13	50	285
1-2 yrs.	5	1	31	12	-61
2-3 yrs.	4	2	25	25	0
3-4 yrs.	1	1	6	12	100
4-5 yrs.	0	0	0	0	0
> 5 yrs.	4	0	25	0	-100

11. How long do you think you will remain in the child and youth care field?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
< 1 yr.	0	0	0	0	0
1-2 yrs.	1	1	6	12	100
2-3 yrs.	2	1	13	12	-8
3-5 yrs.	3	1	19	12	-37
5-10 yrs.	2	2	13	25	93
> 10 yrs.	8	3	50	37	-26

12. Do you think you will remain in the child and youth care profession after this job?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
yes	13	5	81	63	-22
no	3	3	19	37	95

13. How much formal education do you have?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
h.s. diploma	0	0	0	0	0
college credit	1	1	6	12	100

2-yr. degree	1	0	6	0	-100
4-yr. degree	10	6	62	75	21
some grad. work	2	1	13	12	-8
master's degree	2	0	13	0	-100

14. Do you have a college degree in a subject related to this field?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
yes	10	6	62	75	21
no	6	2	37	25	-32

15. Do you plan to seek further education in this field?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
yes	14	6	87	75	-14
no	2	2	12	25	108

16. How much support do you think your supervisor gives you on the job?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.

very	7	4	44	50	14
relatively	5	3	31	37	19
some	4	1	25	12	-52
little	0	0	0	0	0
not at all	0	0	0	0	0

17. How much feedback do you receive on your work?

	pre-	post-	%pre-	%post-	%chg.
very	2	2	12	28	133
relatively	4	3	25	44	76
some	8	2	50	28	-44
sparse	2	0	12	0	-100
none	0	0	0	0	0